DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 064 337 TM 001 502

AUTHOR Hansen, Lee H.
TITLE Toward a Program for Testing in the Affective Domain.
PUB DATE Apr 72
NOTE 7p.; Symposium paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, Illinois, April 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Tests; *City Wide Programs; *Research Committees; *Student Testing; *Testing Programs
IDENTIFIERS Madison; *Nucleus Testing Committee; Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

A review of the work of an affective sub-committee of the Nucleus Testing Committee is provided. Proposed recommendations of the sub-committee are that: (1) the committee as a group identify an important question in the affective domain and design a testing project by which to gather data to answer the question; (2) a set of guidelines for the use of affective test data and the development of an affective testing program be developed and presented to the Superintendent's Cabinet for adoption before September 1972; (3) support be given to several affective testing projects currently in various stages of study or implementation; and (4) a curriculum task force be formed to specifically identify areas of our curriculum that purport to have affective goals and to suggest priorities to the Superintendent's Cabinet for the development of evaluation projects to measure these goals. (DB)

ED 064337

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TOWARD A PROGRAM FOR TESTING IN THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

Lee H. Hansen

Coordinator of Research and Testing
Madison Public Schools

1972

Presented as part of a Symposium entitled "The Madison Plan: A New Approach to System-wide Testing" at the 1972 convention of the American Educational R search Association.

TM 001 502

The needs assessment produced by the Nucleus Testing Committee during the 1970-71 school year suggested that there was considerable interest in testing in the affective domain. Representative of the questions being asked by teachers and administrators were the following:

- What is the child's attitude toward himself? toward peers? toward teachers?
- What is the child's attitude toward learning? toward tests? toward different subjects?
- How does the child function under pressure?
- What motivates the child? What are the child's current interests?

Consequently, an affective sub-committee of the Nucleus Testing Committee was formed to study these needs and submit recommendations to the Superintendent. This paper views the work of the committee and its implications for future direction in testing in Madison.

When the committee began meeting, it soon became apparent to all of us that the group was operating in a knowledge vacuum. Few of us knew enough about the affective domain or its measurement to make intelligent comments. Thus an immediate goal of the group was to learn something of the affective domain, how to measure it, and what has been done to measure it.

During the past year and a half the committee has learned much about the affective domain. Through a study of the Krathwohl[1] taxonomy the committee learned that an affect has several dimensions: negative to positive (direction), strong

to weak (intensity), and central to peripheral (behavior control).

With the help of Dr. Cy Svoboda, philosophical psychologist, the group studied several taxonomies which structure various dimensions of the affective domain: the concept of needs through Maslow's needs hierarchy,[2] the concept of values through the theoretical and empirical work of Gordon Allport,[3] and the concept of attitudes using a recent taxonomy proposed by Rokeach.[4]

Since some members of the committee had noticed early in the deliberations that the needs assessment called for diagnostic data on individual pupils, Dr. Svoboda discussed at length the diagnostic use of information and the invasion of "ego privacy." A related question given equal attention was, "What kinds of training and skills must teachers and administrators have to do more good than harm with such data."

The aforementioned discussion created a readiness within the committee to explore additional uses of affective data. With the help of Professor Steve Asher, social psychologist at the University of Illinois, the group discussed the importance of assessing the social and psychological climate of the school and classroom.

Moreover, Dr. Asher, after stressing the tenuous inferential relationship between an affective construct and its behavioral measures, went on to give the committee several criteria for putting together an affective testing program. These are discussed briefly here, since they have provided the committee with considerable direction.

1. The data must have utility. Finding out how many children hate their mothers may be interesting, but probably has limited utility, since the school system has relatively little control over the home environment. Finding out if there is a relationship between teacher interpersonal style and children's attitudes toward school may have a rich utility for decisions regarding in-service training.

2. The data should have multiple useability. The data should be gathered, where possible, in such a way that several levels of decision-makers in the school system find it useful. This increases greatly the benefit-to-cost ratio, since most affective testing projects involve costly development.

3. Affective data should be gathered by the process of convergent operations.5 To give a single paper-and-pencil test to answer an affective domain question is risky, because the validity and reliability of such measures is often open to serious question. However, the user of affective data can be more confident of his conclusions if he has used several different techniques for gathering data, particularly if these techniques present different validity and reliability problems.

4. Unobtrusive data should be gathered to supplement affective test data. An extention of the above criterion, this criterion alerted committee members to the rich sources of data that are naturally available in the environment and can be gathered through observation or other relatively unobtrusive procedures.

5. Affective data should not invade the psychological privacy of the individual. The individual must not be duped into revealing something of his psychological self without his will or knowledge, particularly when that information is threatening to the igo.

6. Emphasis should be placed on affective concerns that relate to cognitive objectives. At present "improved mental health" is not, in and of itself, a clearly defined goal of the schools. Our main concerns are cognitive. This affective data will have utility largely to the extent that it relates to cognitive concerns.

In a quest to become more informed the committee has also explored different kinds of paper-and-pencil tests, since, as one committee member put it, "I don't even know what most of these

tests look like." By actually filling out affective instruments, the committee was exposed to a Likert scale, a semantic differential, a Q-sort, a critical incident scale, and several rating scales. Strengths and weaknesses of each were discussed, studies using each one were described, and alternative uses were explored. An unexpected but pleasant by-product of this experience was the realization of many committee members that this kind of data presents many insurmountable problems when used diagnosticly.

This latter activity was thought necessary, since one of the original recommendations of the affective group was to make available a bank of affective instruments that teachers and administrators could draw upon. Following the experience with the tests, the group was less enthusiastic about indiscriminately making such a bank available.

This review brings us up to date as to the work of this committee. What remains is to suggest what the future harbors for affective testing in Madison. The committee is currently working on several recommendations for next year. While not firm, they do suggest the direction the committee is taking, and for that reason they are listed and described here.

1. It is recommended that the committee as a group identify an important question in the affective domain and design a testing project by which to gather data to answer the question. This recommendation reflects a felt need by the committee for a first-hand experience with affective testing. Considerable interest has been expressed in using a question related to classroom or school climate. Possibilities are currently being explored to involve school psychologists with research skills in the project.

2. It is recommended that a set of guidelines for the use of affective test data and the development of an affective

testing program be developed and presented to the Superintendent's Cabinet for adoption before September, 1972. The study of the affective domain by the committee has had a sobering effect. The group are no less enthusiastic about the needs in this area, but they are more aware of the limitations, dangers, and priorities.

3. It is recommended that support be given to several affective testing projects currently in various stages of study or implementation. Suggested projects include:

   a) Development of a School Morale Scale to assess the feelings and attitudes of middle school youngsters toward school. This project has been under way for a year as part of the evaluation of the new middle school program.

   b) Development of a series of tests to assess the impact of our human relations program on kindergarten and first grade youngsters. This project is currently in the development stage in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin.

   C) Development of a series of techniques to assess the impact of the Glaser[6] "Schools Without Failure" program being implemented in our elementary and middle schools. This project is currently in an early planning stage.

4. It is recommended that a curriculum task force be formed to specifically identify areas of our curriculum that purport to have affective goals and to suggest priorities to the Superintendent's Cabinet for the development of evaluation projects to measure these goals. This recommendation is a landmark for the Madison Public Schools, since it demands for the first time that systematic attention be given to affective curriculum goals and their evaluation.

Normally one might look with some skepticism upon recommendations for action, since the bureaucratic "slip twixt cup and lip" often is the rule more than the exception. However, it is also important to remember that a year ago we were not even capable of making such recommendations. There is every reason to believe that the future is brighter for affective testing in the Madison Public Schools.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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